

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A legal citation checker, comprising:

a software interface that interfaces with an existing word processing application;

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a software component operable with said software interface and executable with
said word processing application, wherein said software component functions to locate a
legal case citation within a word processing document and to identify an error within said
legal case citation within said word processing document as compared against a
predetermined legal case citation standard.

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2. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component functions to
correct said error within said legal case citation within said word processing document according
to said predetermined legal case citation standard.

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3. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software interface and said software
component are unitary.

4. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component functions to
locate automatically said legal case citation within said word processing document.

5. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component further functions to parse said legal case citation into a plurality of constituent elements.
6. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component further functions to provide an error message as to the identified error.
7. The legal citation checker of claim 2, wherein said software component further functions to offer a suggestion as to correction of the identified error.
- 10 8. The legal citation checker of claim 7, wherein said software component further functions to enable a user to accept or ignore said suggestion.
9. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component further functions to display said legal case citation standard that is relevant to the identified error.
- 15 10. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said legal case citation standard comprises the Bluebook.
11. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component adjusts its identification of said error according to a type of said word processing document.

12. The legal citation checker of claim 11, wherein said type of word processing document is selected from a group consisting of: a state court document, a federal court document, and a non-court document.

5 13. The legal citation checker of claim 1, further comprising a storage medium containing elements selected from a group consisting of: said software interface, said software component, an instruction relevant to said software interface, and an instruction relevant to said software component.

10 14. The legal citation checker of claim 1, wherein said software component functions to locate an ambiguous legal case citation and resolve the ambiguity of said ambiguous legal case citation.

15 15. The legal citation checker of claim 5, wherein said plurality of constituent elements are identified through a procedure selected from a group consisting of: a fuzzy logic procedure, a fuzzy pattern matching procedure, a scoring procedure, and a ranking procedure.

16. A method of locating a legal case citation in an open document that is being edited by a word processing application, comprising the steps of:

20 automatically scanning said open document for said legal case citation; and locating said legal case citation within said open document.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said step of locating includes locating an ambiguous case citation and resolving the ambiguity of said ambiguous case citation.

5 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of identifying an error within said legal case citation within said open document as compared against a predetermined legal case citation standard.

10 19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of correcting said error within said legal case citation within said open document according to said predetermined legal case citation standard.

20. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of parsing said legal case citation into a plurality of constituent elements.

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21. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of identifying said plurality of constituent element through a procedure selected from a group consisting of: a fuzzy logic procedure, a fuzzy pattern matching procedure, a scoring procedure, and a ranking procedure.

20 22. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of providing an error message as to the identified error.

23. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of providing a suggestion as to a correction for the identified error.

5 24. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of providing said legal case citation standard that is relevant to the identified error.

10 25. The method of claim 18, wherein said legal case citation standard is established by the Bluebook.

26. The method of claim 18, further comprising adjusting the step of identifying an error within said legal case citation according to a type of said open document.

15 27. The method of claim 26, wherein said type of open document is selected from a group consisting of: a state court document, a federal court document, and a non-court document.

28. A legal citation checker, comprising:

means for interfacing with an existing word processing application; and

means for operating with said means for interfacing, said means for operating also

20 for locating a legal case citation within an open word processing document that is being

edited and for identifying an error within said legal case citation as compared against a predetermined case citation standard.

29. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for correcting
5 said error within said legal case citation within said open word processing document.

30. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for interfacing and said means
for operating are unitary.

10 31. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for locating
automatically said legal case citation.

32. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for parsing said
legal case citation into a plurality of constituent elements.

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33. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for providing an
error message as to the identified error.

20 34. The legal citation checker of claim 29, wherein said means for operating for offering a
suggestion as to the correction of the identified error.

35. The legal citation checker of claim 34, wherein said means for operating for enabling a user to accept or ignore said suggestion.

36. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for providing
5 said predetermined legal case citation standard that is relevant to the identified error.

37. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said predetermined legal case citation standard comprises the Bluebook.

10 38. The legal citation checker of claim 28, wherein said means for operating for adjusting said identifying said error according to a type of said open word processing document.

15 39. The legal citation checker of claim 38, wherein said type of said open word processing document is selected from a group consisting of: a state court document, a federal court document, and a non-court document.

40. The legal citation checker of claim 28, further comprising means for storing an element relevant to said legal citation checker, wherein said element is selected from a group consisting of: said means for interfacing, said means for operating, means for instructing on the operation
20 of said means for interfacing, and means for instructing on the operation of said means for operating.

41. A legal citation checker for verifying the stylistic accuracy of a legal case citation within an open word processing document within an word processing application, said legal citation checker comprising:

5 an integration component, wherein said integration component interfaces with said word processing application;

a data structure component operable with said integration component, wherein said data structure component provides a plurality of stylistic accuracy rule for a plurality of legal jurisdictions;

a scanning component operable with said data structure component, wherein said scanning component scans said open word processing document locate said legal case citation;

a testing component operable with said scanning component, wherein said testing component tests said located legal case citation for an error in stylistic accuracy; and

15 an error component operable with said testing component, wherein said testing component corrects a detected error in stylistic accuracy within said open word processing document.

42. The legal citation checker of claim 41, wherein said integration component, said data structure component, said scanning component, said testing component, and said error component are of a configuration selected from a group consisting of: a unitary component

configuration, a partial unitary component configuration, and an individual component configuration.

43. The legal citation checker of claim 41, wherein said scanning component parses the

5 located legal citation into a plurality of constituent elements.

44. The legal citation checker of claim 41, wherein said error component displays said

detected error in stylistic accuracy.

45. The legal citation checker of claim 41, wherein said error component provides a

suggestion for a correction of said detected error in stylistic accuracy.

46. The legal citation checker of claim 45, wherein said error component enables a user to

accept or ignore said suggestion.

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47. A method of operation of a legal citation checker with an open word processing

document that is being edited by a word processing application, said method comprising the

steps of:

locating a legal case citation within said open word process document;

20 identifying an error within a legal case citation within said open word processing document; and

displaying said error within a window or dialog box displayed simultaneously with said open word processing document.

48. The method of claim 47, further comprising highlighting said error.

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49. The method of claim 47, further comprising offering a selection of a type of said open word processing document, wherein said selection of said type is displayed in a window or dialog box displayed simultaneously with said open word processing document.

50. The method of claim 47, further comprising displaying a suggestion for correction of said error within a window or dialog box displayed simultaneously with said open word processing document.

51. The method of claim 50, further comprising offering an interactive acceptance or denial 15 of said suggestion.

52. The method of claim 47, further comprising displaying a legal case citation standard that is relevant to said error in a window or dialog box displayed simultaneously with said open word processing document.

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53. The method of claim 51, further comprising correcting said error within said legal case citation within said open word processing document upon acceptance of said suggestion.

54. A legal citation checker that operates as a plug-in application to a word processing application, wherein the legal citation checker operates according to a method comprising locating a legal case citation within an open word processing document.

55. The method of claim 54, further comprising the step of identifying an error within the legal case citation as compared against a legal case citation standard.

10 56. The method of claim 54, further comprising the step of correcting the error within the legal case citation within the open word processing document according to the legal case citation standard.

15 57. A legal citation checker comprises a first component that enables the legal citation checker to operate as a plug-in to a word processing application and comprises a second component, operable with the first component, that operates to locate a legal case citation within an open word processing document.

20 58. The legal citation checker of claim 57, wherein said second component operates to identify an error within the legal case citation as compared against a legal case citation standard.

59. The legal citation checker of claim 57, wherein said second component operates to correct the legal case citation within the open word processing document in conformance with the legal case citation standard.

5 60. The legal citation checker of claim 57, wherein said first component and said second component are unitary.